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Department of State TELEGRAM

PAGE 01 OF 02 SAN SA 02117 2401212 0744 SAN SA 02117 2401212
ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 +A-35 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-07 PC-01 IO-14
ACDA-12 CCME-00 EB-06 LAB-04 STR-09 SIL-01 AGRE-00
/115 W

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O R 2323452 MAR 80
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7660
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PAN
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 2117

ROME FOR VATICAN CITY

E.O. 12065: GDS 3/22/86 (MILLSPAUGH, ROBERT) OR-P
TAGS: PINS PINT SHUM ES
SUBJ: (U) ARCHBISHOP'S HOMILY, MARCH 23

2. (U) BACKGROUND. THE LAST TWO WEEKS HAVE WITNESSED INCREASING TENSION BETWEEN THE CHURCH ON ONE SIDE AND THE MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES ON THE OTHER. A POLICE STATION WAS ALLEGEDLY ATTACKED FROM A CHURCH, A PRIEST WAS ACCUSED OF SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES, RADIO HAVANA STATED THAT THE ARCHBISHOP SUPPORTED INSURRECTION, AND THE HOME OF TWO BELGIAN PRIESTS WAS SEARCHED AND RANSACKED. ON MARCH 21 THE ARMED FORCES ACCUSED THE ARCHBISHOP OF REFUSING TO HELP A POLICEMAN WHO WAS TORTURED INSIDE A CHURCH.

3. (U) EARLY IN HIS MARCH 23 HOMILY, ARCHBISHOP ROMERO STATED HE HAS NO POLITICAL AMBITIONS AND IS FOLLOWING NO "LINE" OTHER THAN CHURCH POLICY. HE ASKED THAT THE CHURCH NOT BE MANIPULATED, ADDING IT HAS MUCH TO GIVE TO ALL AND IS ON NO ONE'S SIDE. "IT'S OK," HE SAID, TO JOIN POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, OR THE GOVERNMENT AS
LONG AS ONE'S MOTIVES ARE CHRISTIAN. THE SOLUTIONS TO THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS, HE EMPHASIZED, ARE CHRISTIAN SOLUTIONS AND NOT THOSE OF ANY PARTICULAR GROUP.

4. (U) ACCUSATIONS AND REPLIES. A. ROMERO READ A STATEMENT FROM THE NATIONAL GUARD CLAIMING THAT A CERTAIN PRIEST HAD OFFERERED "TO TRAVEL TO CUBA OR NICARAGUA TO BRING REINFORCEMENTS FOR THE STRUGGLE," AND THE PRIEST'S REPLY THAT THE CHARGES WERE FALSE.
B. HE READ THE RESPONSE OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE TO HIS COMPLAINT ABOUT THE SEARCH AND RANSACKING OF THE HOME OF TWO BELGIAN PRIESTS. ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY, THE NATIONAL GUARD DID CARRY OUT THE SEARCH BUT DID NOT KNOW THAT PRIESTS LIVED IN THE HOUSE, THE MINISTRY HAS ORDERED THE NATIONAL GUARD TO BE MORE CAREFUL AND TO CONSULT IT BEFORE ACTING IN THE FUTURE. THE ARCHBISHOP COMMENTED, "I HOPE SO; THE FACTS SAY OTHERWISE."
C. ROMERO GAVE THE FOLLOWING VERSION OF THE INCIDENT IN WHICH HE HAD BEEN ACCUSED OF REFUSING TO HELP A POLICEMAN WHO WAS TORTURED IN A CHURCH: AFTER THE POLICE ASKED HIM FOR HELP IN LIBERATING A POLICEMAN CAPTURED BY THE OCCUPIERS OF THE CATHEDRAL (FAPU), HE IMMEDIATELY SENT A DELEGATION. HIS REPRESENTATIVES, HOWEVER, WERE TOLD
BY THE OCCUPIERS THAT NO POLICEMAN WAS PRESENT. THE DELEGATION THEN WENT TO THE UNIVERSITY AND WERE TOLD BY THE REVOLUTIONARY COORDINATING BODY OF THE MASSES (CRM) THAT A POLICEMAN HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED BUT WAS SET FREE. LATER, PRIESTS INTERVIEWED THE POLICEMAN IN THE HOSPITAL. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO THE BASEMENT OF THE CHURCH, BEATEN, TORTURED WITH ELECTRIC SHOCKS AND AN ABRASIVE SUBSTANCE IN THE EYES, AND THREATENED WITH THE DEATH OF FAMILY MEMBERS.
D. THE ARCHBISHOP READ A PLEA THAT CHURCHES NOT BE USED AS PLACES OF "POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION, MUCH LESS FOR MILITARY TRAINING." HE ASKED THE POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS TO RESPECT THE CHURCH'S FUNCTION AS PLACES OF REFUGE.

5. (U) US MILITARY AID. ROMERO SAID HE HAD RECEIVED MUCH SUPPORT FROM CHRISTIAN GROUPS FOR HIS OPPOSITION TO US MILITARY AID WHICH MIGHT ASSIST REPRESSION. THIS INCLUDED, HE SAID, SUPPORT FROM A FORMER US AMBASSADOR TO EL SALVADOR WHOM HE IDENTIFIED AS "WILLIAMS."

6. (U) REPRESSION. THE ARCHBISHOP CHARACTERIZED THE PAST WEEK AS "TREMENDOUSLY TRAGIC" AND SAID IT WAS MARKED BY LARGE MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST CAMPESINOS. HE MENTIONED INCIDENTS IN THESE OPERATIONS IN WHICH A TOTAL OF 27 CAMPESINOS DIED.

7. (U) ROMERO READ EXCERPTS FROM AN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT WHICH IS SEVERELY CRITICAL OF THE GOES. AMONG THE ALLEGATIONS HE MENTIONED ARE THE FOLLOWING:
-63 INDIVIDUALS WERE ASSASSINATED BETWEEN MARCH 10 AND 14
-THE JRG IS RESPONSIBLE FOR 600 DEATHS
-HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS ARE WORSE THAN BEFORE THE OCTOBER 15 COUP
-AT LEAST 3500 CAMPESINOS HAVE FLED FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE TO SAN SALVADOR BECAUSE OF GOES REPRESSION.

8. 7 U) GENERAL STRIKE. ACCORDING TO ROMERO, THE EXTREME LEFT SHOWED STRENGTH IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, THE FACTORIES, AND THE CITIES. ERRORS WERE
PROBABLY COMMITTED, BUT THE LEFT DEMONSTRATED IT CAN PARALYSE THE ECONOMY. THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE, HE ADDED, WAS HARSH. THE POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED IN "COMBATITIVE ACTIVITIES" BUT ITS TACTICS DO NOT JUSTIFY GOVERNMENTAL REPRESSION.

9. (U) CRM. "CERTAINLY THE CRM HAS ITS FAULTS, AND IT IS STILL A LONG WAY FROM CONVERTING ITSELF INTO A COHERENT ALTERNATIVE." ROMERO EXPRESSED HIS HOPE THAT THE CRM, "UNDOUBTEDLY AN EXPRESSION OF THE PEOPLE", WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND THAT ITS FAULTS DO NOT CAUSE THE PEOPLE TO REPUDIATE IT. IT MUST "MATURE AND OBTAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PEOPLE'S WANTS." ACCORDING TO ROMERO, THE CRM'S FAULTS ARE NOT THAT IT IS SUBVERSIVE, BUT RESULT FROM THE FACT THAT IT HAS NOT BEEN PERMITTED A NORMAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. THE MASSACRES OF ITS FOLLOWERS HAVE CAUSED ITS RADICALIZATION, AND "IT WOULD BE HARD FOR IT NOT TO ENGAGE IN ARMED STRUGGLE."

10. (U) THE SITUATION. "THE LEAST ONE CAN SAY IS THAT THE COUNTRY IS IN A PRE-REVOLUTIONARY STATE," THE ARCHBISHOP ADDED, AND THE TRANSITION CANNOT BE STOPPED. HE SAID THAT THE QUESTION IS ONE OF

FINDING THE LEAST VIOLENT SOLUTION FOR THE TRANSITION. ALL PEOPLE, AND PARTICULARLY THE MILITARY, SHOULD THINK ABOUT THIS. IT MIGHT BE, SUGGESTED, THAT THE AGRICULTURAL REFORM IS ONLY A TRICK TO HALT THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION.

11. (U) AFTER MENTIONING OTHER INCIDENTS OF REPRESSION, THE ARCHBISHOP SAID IT MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO ANALYSE THE NEW GOVERNMENT WHICH WANTED TO END THESE SHAMEFUL THINGS, BUT HE WOULD NOT TAKE UP THE AUDIENCE'S TIME. HE NOTED THAT WITHOUT ROOTS IN THE PEOPLE, NO GOVERNMENT CAN SUCCEED, MUCH LESS WHEN IT TRIES TO MAINTAIN ITSELF BY FORCE.

12. (U) SECURITY FORCES. AT THE END OF HIS REMARKS, THE ARCHBISHOP MADE
A PLEA TO THE SECURITY FORCES TO STOP THE KILLING. HE STATED THAT SOLDIERS ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO CARRY OUT IMPROPER ORDERS.

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